

WHAT'S COOKIN'?

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Shock and horror! I just learned that two of the three staff preparing meals in our school cafeteria didn't cook at home. They don't even like cooking! Both women are married and are still in their twenties. I asked them whether their mothers ever taught them to cook. Both replied that their mothers didn't like cooking either. My next question was asking them what they ate for meals. "We eat out most of the time," they said in unison.

My memory went back to my earlier life when my two brothers and I had years of preparing the family dinner, complete with dessert, before our parents arrived home from work. Each of us had several years sharpening up our culinary skills and experimenting with sauces and herbs to create tasty dishes. Today, cooking is one of my passions. I don't use recipe books and many of my innovations have delighted visitors' taste buds. I'm also the 'Soup King' and love coming up with new, delicious creations.

Thankfully, my parents believed that it was necessary to teach their sons (I didn't have any sisters) how to cook, do the washing and vacuum the house. We were taught to grow vegetables, flowers and fruit. We couldn't afford to hire tradesmen so we learned how to fix our own motors and appliances. The outcome was that we became responsible young adults by all sharing the family work responsibilities and, consequently, were able to pass these values and skills on to our children.

It's still a parent's duty to prepare our kids for the real world. Parents need to ensure that both their sons and daughters are fully equipped to fulfill their roles as husband, wife, mother, father, worker and upstanding citizen. If I am going to be a good husband I need to share the workload in the home. As a male role model and father I need to be able to cook and do the washing, too.

It reminds me of a friend who demonstrated pitiful life skills. His wife had an emergency situation where her sister was ill and she needed to go to be with her for three weeks. When she returned she found 21 pairs of socks and 21 pairs of underwear in a heap by the washing machine! He must have been a clean guy. When he ran out of socks and underwear he bought new ones because he didn't know how to work the washing machine! Oh, by the way, he went out to eat for every meal as well! The same guy left his sick wife at home all day with only a bag of chips and a bottle of water!

My friend is not the only man who falls short in life skills. His parents must have pampered him to the extent that he was useless in the home. It was his second marriage. I wonder if his dependency had anything to do with his first marriage failure? Parents often teach their girls these skills, but neglect their

boys. It's not about gender issues at all. It's all about survival skills and being independent rather than dependent.

How happy a wife would be to know that her husband could do his fair share of work around the house, and that he could look after himself and the kids if she ever had to go away for any length of time. We don't all live on large properties or farms where the outside work takes up most of a man's time. If both spouses work then the workload should be evenly shared. Effective modeling occurs when you work in harmony, and your children see that this is how a successful home should function.

So where do you start? Encourage your children to be involved in food preparation and gradually get them to do a portion of the meal on their own, In time let them prepare a whole meal while you have only helped in the planning. The same goes for other chores. Show them how to do particular tasks from an early age. Let them practice to get it and encourage them on the sidelines. Have high expectations. Quit stepping in and taking over because you can do it faster or better. They will rise to your standards if you don't accept sloppy work and if you praise them when it is done right. It's all about investing good housekeeping skills to enhance our children's future relationships. It is the right and respectful thing to do for one another

The family unit is a God-inspired institution and it is fully enhanced when we do a great job in raising extraordinary kids. The blessings will be passed on through generations. Be encouraged.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.